



® An Investment in Latino Youth®



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In this issue of POLICY NOTES, a brief monthly update of legislative activity and ASPIRA's work in the Nation's capital, we discuss the following. We hope you appreciate news for federal, state, and local policy makers of federal Latino education initiatives.

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A Tip on Why It is Important to Vote in this Year's Elections

NHLA Releases 1996 Policy Summary

The upcoming Presidential and Congressional elections are crucial to the well being of programs and services that bridge the gap between the educational needs of Hispanic children and young people and the federal resources to meet those needs. Not only will the November 5th elections determine who will become President of the United States, but they will also determine who the next Members of Congress and Senate will be. Even more important, the elections will determine who the next chairpersons of key committees in the U.S. Congress shall be. These chairpersons are important because they will have the power to decide what legislative proposals to debate in their committees, if and how programs and services are to be funded, and where federal dollars shall flow. On what committees will the Members of Congress and Senate from your state serve if elected or reelected?

In October, the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda released a policy agenda for the year 2000 that addresses the socioeconomic conditions of Hispanics living in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and what the U.S. Congress, The White House and other elected and appointed officials could do to improve these conditions. The NHLA is the organization that brings together the 32 major national Hispanic organizations, along with prominent Hispanic leaders, representing all Hispanic groups -- Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Dominicans, and Central and South Americans -- over 20 million Hispanics in this country.

"This agenda collects the concerns of the Hispanic community in the areas of civil rights, education, health, housing and economic development, and sets forth specific policy recommendations in each of these areas to ensure we, Hispanic Americans, are guaranteed our rights, and participate fully and equally in the future of America," said Ronald Blackburn-Moreno, NHLA Chairperson, and National Executive Director of ASPIRA. "The NHLA developed the policy summary over the past year through a broad-based, national initiative that reached out to all segments of our community to arrive at a consensus about a vision and our hopes for the future," he said.

"The agenda is a call to action. In particular, it is a call to the Presidential candidates -- President Clinton and Senator Dole -- to candidates for Congress and for state and local office, to commit to the policies set forth in this agenda -- the policies that guarantee our rights and that will make us full partners in the future of this society," said Blackburn-Moreno. "America has the choice of becoming a nation divided by hate, racism, and deepening economic disparity, where communities are weakened and our leadership in the world diminished, or, we can become an even stronger, united, nation, a nation that values all of its citizens, where communities and families are strong and prosper, where we encourage and build on our rich diversity," he said.

Among recommendations for improving education, he stated that "the President must reaffirm his mandate to make every federal agency involved in education and training to be accountable for providing equitable, educational services to Hispanics, to coordinate their programs with other agencies, and to provide accurate information on their educational programs. An effective mechanism must exist to continuously monitor these efforts," he said. Federal support for programs that affect preschool children, including WIC and Head Start, should be increased substantially.

"Support for Title I and for Goals 2000 should be increased to improve the academic skills of all children at an early grade level. The practice of tracking Hispanic students into low level academic programs must end. Latino students should have equal access to well-prepared, experienced teachers and to the emerging technologies that more affluent students have," he said.

"Bilingual Education must be supported to ensure that students who are not proficient in English receive a quality education and effective support while they learn English," he noted. "Efforts to deprive immigrant students of access to education, regardless of the immigration status of their parents, must be opposed," he said.

"The President and Congress should reaffirm, in the strongest terms, their commitment to Affirmative Action to increase Hispanic participation in higher education. Federal and State Student Financial Aid, including Pell Grants, must be increased substantially for students most in need to ensure they have access to a college education. The student loan burden on low-income families and students must be decreased.

Congressional Support for Hispanic Issues in 1995-96

Mobilization for Equity

President's Advisory Commission Calls for Action on Hispanic American Education

Hispanic-Serving Institutions should be supported and tapped as a valuable resource in promoting the success of Hispanic students, as are the Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

"The Hispanic community is vigilant and will hold any and all public officials accountable for their support for this agenda," said Blackburn-Moreno. We hope that this will serve to better educate our community concerning the positions of these elected officials -- who supports the Hispanic community and who is against us," he said. (Contact: Ronald Blackburn-Moreno)

How Did Members of Congress Vote on Issues of Importance to the Hispanic Community? The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLEA), which brings together the 32 major national Latino organizations, recently released a record on how the members of the U.S. Congress voted in the past two years on Key issues affecting Hispanics.

Since its inception, the national organizations which comprise the NHLEA have been in the forefront of establishing and supporting programs that ensure equity, responsiveness and empowerment of the Hispanic community. In past years, NHLEA has monitored the U.S. Congress through its report on political appointments in the Clinton administration and its first Congressional Voting Record.

This year, 10 key House bills and amendments were determined to be of great relevance to Latinos. The record of how Members of Congress voted were compiled and each representative ranked based on the following question: *Did Members of Congress Vote Pro-Hispanic or Against-Hispanics during the 104th U.S. Congress?* (Contact: Ronald Blackburn-Moreno)

Through their workshop series, ASPIRA parents and students have an opportunity to discuss student rights and key education equity issues which affect their schools. Among the topics discussed are: Barriers to Parent Involvement, Student Placement, Student Achievement, School Finance, and Bilingual Education. Parents and students are using the ASPIRA MFE Learning Module to generate discussion about these issues as well as state and national efforts to improve the education of students and ways to remove barriers to participation for parents in their schools. Recruitment of parents and students for these workshops is done throughout the year by local ASPIRA facilitators. (Contact: Rosie Torres)

Following several public hearings around the country over the past year, and at which ASPIRA provided testimony, the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans issued a report detailing the condition of Hispanic students in our schools. At the end of September, the 22-member Commission met with Vice President Gore to discuss their findings and to officially deliver the report, *Our Nation on the Fault Line: Hispanic American Education*, to him on behalf of President Clinton and to U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley.

While the report lacks the critical inventory on federal agencies, long awaited by ASPIRA and other advocacy organizations,

Youth Speak Out at National Summit on Latino Children

it does recommend that government address several issues raised in past years by education advocates. Included among the report's findings are: Hispanic students disproportionately enrolled in "resource poor" schools; inordinate numbers of Hispanics are dropping out of school; bilingualism is being treated as a problem rather than as a resource; representation of the Hispanic community in leadership positions in education is lacking. The report cites significant disparities in educational attainment between Hispanics and others, including higher dropout rates and lower numbers of college graduates.

Vice President Gore, on behalf of President Clinton, indicated the Administration's commitment to "utilize this report as a blueprint to address the education needs and challenges of Hispanic Americans." Gore said the Administration has already begun the work that must be done. For example: increased funding for Head Start; expansion of efforts to raise school standards and achievement through the Goals 2000: Educate America Act; support for the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act; and promoting access to higher education.

"The report is a call to action to address the critical importance of better education for Hispanic students," said Commission Chair Ana Margarita "Cha" Guzman. "Providing a quality education for all our nation's children is an integral part of building the bridge to the 21st century." (For copies of the report contact: Alfred R. Ramirez, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 600 Independence Ave., SW, Room 2115, Washington, D.C. 20202. Tele: 202/ 401-1411).

In September the Corporate Fund for Children sponsored a national summit entitled, *La Promesa de Un Futuro Brillante*. Among the many speakers and awardees in attendance were several students who met as a focus group to analyze the issues and challenges they are faced with in today's America. Among issues highlighted by the group was the lack of new role models in the Latino community, discrimination, and identity. The group raised the question about how to define a "Hispanic," acknowledging that many of today's youth do not know what it means to be a "Chicano" or a "Mexican," etc. and this devalues their existence.

Armed with the tools of self-esteem, interpersonal communications skills and knowledge students can gain a sense of self. As a student named Adolph expressed it, "...we're very intelligent ... we can go out to change the world." "I'm going to be someone in life -- and I'm going to do it as a LATINO," said another student. To do this, however, these young people know that their are obstacles in their path to success that must be removed.

The students also addressed the issue of lack of coverage of youth by the media. "It makes a major difference in our lives," said a student. When the youth see themselves in the newspaper, "...they realize that they are someone important, and they can make a difference," said the young woman.

Toward an Effective Response: Life after Hopwood

In September, an Affirmative Action Policy Briefing was convened by the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR), a consortium of 13 Latino research centers based in major universities across the U.S. to bring together Senior Latino scholars and national civil rights experts to address the implications of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in *Texas vs. Hopwood*. The briefing was the first broad-based national Latino response to the Hopwood decision.

According to these leaders, it is still legal for universities to target and recruit particular groups of students for admission, as long as it is to diversify student population or to remedy a past discrimination. The ruling only effects those states within the Fifth Circuit (Texas, Louisiana, California, etc), but could have a ripple effect in other states who do not understand that it is limited to just these areas.

The ruling covered an admissions policy of the University of Texas System Law School which had been thrown out in 1992. According to Ricardo Martinez of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, while the case attacks the special admission of minorities to the school, it also brings our attention to the fact that there were 109 Anglo students admitted to the law school who had lower scores than the minority students in the case. This could create new court battles.

The leaders discussed concerns regarding confusion over the new ruling and the negative impact this could have on the future of special-admissions programs for minority students in other parts of the country as a result of misinterpretation of the ruling. For example, the impact this could have on high school counseling and motivating minorities to pursue a college education and other opportunities. In states with large numbers of minorities this could be devastating to ensuring an adequately educated workforce. In Texas, for example, 41% of the population is comprised of young persons ages 15-24. Texas' population is 36% Latino, 34% Black, 48% White, and 2% Asian and other nationalities. The state cannot afford to have a 41% badly educated workforce for its future. According to the U.S. Department of Education, states have a continuing obligation to eliminate the vestiges of discrimination. (Contact: Rosie Torres)

Fiscal Year 1997 Appropriations Update

Efforts to restore funding for Bilingual Education and the HEP & CAMP programs by the White House proved successful following a Labor, HSS, and Education Appropriations Bill that had proposed elimination and under-funding of these programs. For example, after having slated Bilingual Education for a reduction of 40%, funding was restored so that the program will now receive a 25% increase, although funding for professional development Bilingual Education continues to lag behind. Full HEP & CAMP funding was restored at \$10 million. The TRIO program received an increase of 8% as had been proposed in the bill. (Contact: Rosie Torres)

**Advocates Concerned
that Office of Civil Rights
Plans to Change Data
Collection; Information
Available to Parents and
Students**

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Education Task Force and other groups are concerned about planned changes in data collection by the Office of Civil Rights at the U. S. Department of Education. This year, due to budget reductions, the OCR has had to postpone conducting the biannual Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey. As part of this survey, schools and local school districts are required to provide the number and make-up of students served in federal programs. Since 1968, this survey has been a handy tool for parents and advocates to determine whether all students are benefiting from education programs in a nondiscriminatory manner, and in particular, whether a disproportionate number of students are being placed in certain classes, such as special education, etc. Parents and advocates have used this data to fight for equal access to quality education for students who are racial/and or language minorities, female, or students with disabilities, and thus are very much concerned that changes in the survey may prevent the public from receiving valuable information.

The OCR is planning to redesign the civil rights survey, and may decide to give the responsibility of collecting this data to another entity, namely the National Center for Education Statistics which collects similar data. Advocates want to get a better understanding on how redesigning the survey will improve it as a tool to identify discrimination. According to Wade Henderson, Executive Director of the LCCR, "... collecting and analyzing civil rights data is essential to identifying, remedying, and preventing illegal discrimination in our nation's public schools."

According to Norma Cantú, Director, OCR, she would like to discuss the survey with different groups to learn how useful this information has been to them and how the survey could be improved. (Contact: Rosie Torres)

**Congressional Hispanic
Caucus Works to
Bridge Gap Between
Educational Needs and
Federal Resources**

The Hispanic Education Coalition and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus will be meeting with the heads of federal agencies in an effort to work together on developing department-wide efforts to ensure that the needs of growing numbers of Hispanic and Limited English Proficient students are integrated into the federal decision-making process. In the past year, the CHC wrote to the House Appropriations Committee to oppose cuts in the federal budget for Bilingual Education, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, High School Equivalency Programs and College Assistance Migrant Program (HEP-CAMP), Immigration, and TRIO. The CHC is willing to fight any reductions in these important programs because they bridge the gap between educational needs and federal resources.

Because federal education programs are serving growing numbers of Hispanic and LEP children for the first time, many of these offices responsible for administering these programs have little experience doing so. Therefore, the CHC has proposed a Joint Three-Point Plan that would be under the direction of the Director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA).

National Leadership for Teachers

The plan would 1) ensure department-wide coordination and program development for Hispanic and LEP student educational needs; 2) increase Hispanic and LEP participation in federal education programs; and 3) improve and increase research on Hispanic and other LEP students. (Contact: Rosie Torres)

Biology Institute for High School Teachers, *Life Cycles: Reproduction and Embryological Development*. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation is sponsoring a fellowship for high school (grades 9-12) teachers of the life sciences in both public and private schools in the United States and at the Department of Defense Dependent's Schools. Fifty teachers will be chosen by a peer review committee to attend the institute which will be held on the campus of Princeton University. To qualify, applicants must have taught for at least three years and be assured of a teaching position in grades 9-12 for the 1997-98 school year. No more than one teacher from a school will be accepted.

The institute is supported by a grant from The Howard Hughes Medical Institute. All participant expenses such as travel and lodging will be paid by the Foundation, and there will be a stipend of \$1200. Applications must be postmarked by January 15, 1997; applicant forms and additional information may be requested until November 15, 1996: High School Biology Institute, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, P.O. Box 2421, Princeton, NJ 08543-2421. Fax: (609) 452-0066 / Tel: (609) 452-7007 / Internet: <http://www.woodrow.org>.

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